

**DECISION AND RATIONALE  
for the Environmental Assessment for the  
King Wolf and Coyote Pete Timber Sales**

**Wolf Tree EA Number OR-110-01-036**

**Decision**

It is my decision to implement Alternative 1 and the project design features proposed in the Wolf Tree Project environmental assessment (EA # OR110-01-036). The approved action will produce two timber sales within the Wolf Tree Planning Area. The King Wolf Timber Sale will include the area on the north portion of the Planning Area draining into Wolf Creek and the Coyote Pete Timber Sale Timber will occur on the south portion draining into Coyote Creek. The Wolf Tree Planning Area is located east of the community of Wolf Creek and Interstate 5 highway and is delineated by the Upper Wolf and Coyote sixth field watershed boundaries. The legal description is T 33S, R 5W, sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 in Josephine County. The BLM administers approximately 11,000 acres (52%) of the total 21,000 acres in the Planning Area. The remaining 48% is divided between state, county and private ownerships. Implementation of these two sales is planned to occur within the next three years.

After further field review, I have decided to drop unit 4-3 (regeneration harvest) and unit 9-5 (overstory removal). Commercial thin units 14-6 and 14-8 will be combined and referred to only as unit 14-8. The EA noted that Alternative 1 would harvest approximately 2.9 million board feet (MMBF) of commercial timber. The most recent field information estimates harvest volume of 3.7 MMBF and 386 acres of commercial harvesting by either regeneration harvest (61 acres), overstory removal (56 acres), or commercial thinning (269 acres).

At least 6-10 standing large conifers and 2 large hardwoods per acre, as well as snags and down logs, will be left after regeneration harvesting or overstory removal. In some cases, additional trees will be retained for recruitment of coarse woody debris, to serve as potential snags, to compensate for trees lost to broadcast burning, to provide additional shade for seedlings, or to help retain moist conditions in talus habitat. In the overstory removal units, existing conifer reproduction will be retained to establish the next stand. In commercial thin units, the existing stand will be thinned to release the residual trees.

Following harvest, many of the units will receive site preparation treatments specified in Table 1 of the EA (I approved the implementation of reducing existing fuel hazards in my earlier Wolf Tree Upland Fuels Treatment Decision Record dated January 9, 2002). Regeneration harvest units will be reforested using planted nursery stock. Additional treatments, such as shade-carding, mulching, deer browse protection and controlling competing vegetation might be required to ensure adequate seedling establishment. Maintenance treatments will be implemented for up to ten years following harvest or until the canopy has closed enough to reduce brush species growth.



The main culvert for Wolf Creek on the 33-5-10 road is currently undersized for the recommended 100 year flood regime. The damaged structure will be replaced with a large structural plate pipe arch or culvert, or with a bottomless arch. To ensure passage of fish and other aquatic species, the pipe arch will be countersunk and laid at existing stream gradient.

Approximately 5.3 miles of road will be decommissioned and 3.7 miles of road will be closed with barricades. Decommissioning roads will place land back into production and reduce erosion. It will also reduce vehicle access to lands previously open to the public for hunting, mining, and recreation. Decommissioned roads will be subsoiled, and either mulched or seeded. Cross drains, fills in stream channels, and potentially unstable fill areas will be removed to restore natural hydrologic flow. Barricaded roads are temporary closures to the general public. The road might be open for BLM administrative uses on a seasonal basis, depending upon impacts to the resources.

The EA (page 30) determined that renovation of roads will reduce active erosion from road surfaces and correct drainage problems currently occurring in the Planning Area. Road work includes reshaping existing road prisms and drainage ditches and, replacing/adding cross drains and bottom lay culverts (26.8 mi), improving road drainage by installing waterdips and converting ditched roads to an outsloped configuration (8.5 mi) and improving roads by adding 4 to 8 inch lift of crushed aggregate surfacing (5.4 mi). Three existing road segments requiring renovation and maintenance work were inadvertently left out of Table 2 of the EA. This includes blading and brushing 0.5 miles of the Wolf Creek spur (33-5-10.3B) and blading 0.9 miles of the Murphy Road (32-5-22E) that provide access to an existing helicopter landing. These roads are within Douglas County and near the ridgetop. The third segment includes 0.2 miles of maintenance on 33-5-13-2 in Josephine County. Maintenance activities includes blading and cleaning cross drains. These activities have been reviewed by interdisciplinary team specialists and the effects are considered within those identified in the EA (page 30). There will be no effect to threatened or endangered species.

### **Rationale**

The decision to implement this proposal meets the purpose and need identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan and RMP to manage the Matrix lands with commercial forest products as a major objective. The National Marine Fisheries Service provided a letter of concurrence that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon and Klamath Mountains Province steelhead trout. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife surveys indicate an absence of coho salmon juveniles in Wolf Creek or Coyote Creek.

Three public meetings, including a field trip, were conducted between June and November of 2000 for Wolf Creek residents. I received a letter from the SunnyWolf Community response Team expressing their thanks for including public participating in the planning efforts. The initial Proposal included approximately 970 acres of regeneration harvesting, 100 acres of



commercial thinning and 180 acres of pre-commercial thinning. As mentioned earlier, my decision includes 386 acres of commercial harvesting.

There were three letters of comments from the public regarding the Wolf Tree Project. The main categories of the relevant comments included 1) disagreement with the management objectives in Matrix lands 2) objections to harvesting in spotted owl Critical Habitat Units (CHUs) 3) asking that more detail be provided in the EA such as the survey methodology for the red tree vole 4) disagreement with many of the management practices and protection measures concerning late-successional associates, especially Survey and Manage species.

While some comments disagree with management objectives the Matrix land allocation, the Wolf Tree Project EA states in the Purpose and Need that it will implement the broader Medford Resource Management Plan and also tiers to that Plan's amendments.

Some comments claim that harvesting in Critical Habitat Units is illegal or in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Nothing in the comments indicate that the effects on spotted owls resulting from this project are beyond those described in the Final EIS for the Medford District Resource Management Plan to which the EA is tiered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is aware of the impacts to the northern spotted owl and to owl habitat of the proposed action. They considered the degree to which habitat will be degraded or removed, the proportion of the existing habitat—critical or not—that will be affected, the location of affected Critical Habitat Units (CHUs) in relation to Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) and the potential for connectivity. That agency concluded that the proposed cutting will not result in adverse modification to Critical Habitat and that the action will not violate the Endangered Species Act in their Biological Opinion dated October 12, 2001 (#1-7-01-F-032).

One comment stated that the survey methodology for various species should be specifically described in the EA. I disagree with that contention, since the methods have been described and those descriptions are available to the public. It is clear that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) calls for concise and focused descriptions of the proposals and their effects; not all background information is required to be part of the NEPA document. The methods used and the details of the findings are available in the Medford District office. Including that level of background detail will result in extremely unwieldy and unnecessarily large documents and will not lead to better decision making or understanding by the public.

Several comments disagreed with management practices of Survey and Manage species. Many of those concerns have been dealt with in the Northwest Forest Plan in the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* and the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Survey and Manage, Protection Buffers and other Mitigating Measures in the Northwest Forest Plan*. The Wolf Tree EA tiers to the analyses in these documents. The fact that some people disagree with those analyses or the decisions based on those documents is beyond the scope of the EA. I have reviewed the specific protection

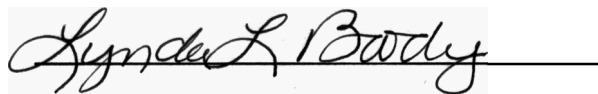


measures and analysis done for these species in light of the objections raised in the comment letters and can find no basis for modifying the proposed alternative.

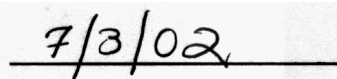
Many of the comments are simply stating a disagreement with commercial harvest on Matrix lands. Others allege faulty or incomplete analysis, but do not offer any data or evidence that will indicate that the EA is inadequate. I am confident that the EA represents a thorough analysis of the site-specific impacts to affected habitats and species, in light of the more comprehensive analysis done in the Medford RMP and Northwest Forest Plan to which the EA is tiered.

In summary, I find that the action will be consistent with the ***Medford District Resource Management Plan*** and amendments, including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for this timber sale will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located.



Lynda L. Boody  
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area  
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



Date



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
**for the Environmental Assessment for the**  
**King Wolf and Coyote Pete Timber Sales**  
**Wolf Tree EA Number OR-110-01-036**

The proposed actions for the King Wolf and Coyote Pete Timber Sales are described in the environmental assessment (EA) and can be obtained at the Medford District or on the Medford BLM internet site: <http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford>

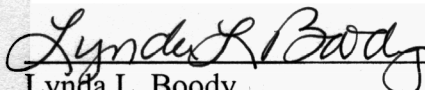
The proposed action is located in: T 33S, R 5W Sections 3,4,5,6,7,9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21,22,23,26,27,28,29,30 in Josephine County.

The following critical elements identified in the BLM handbook will not be adversely affected by this project and have been analyzed in the EA: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, historical or cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, Native American religious sites, invasive species, energy, threatened or endangered species, known hazardous waste areas, water quality, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness and environmental justice. The effects on Threatened and Endangered Species and special status species are described in the EA. Formal and informal consultation requirements, as required under the Endangered Species Act, have been met with US Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion (#1-7-01-F-032) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) letter of concurrence on "not likely to adversely affect" SONC coho salmon or KMP steelhead. The NMFS also found that the proposed actions are unlikely to adversely affect any designated essential fish habitat (EFH) in the same letter dated March 14, 2002. Surveys for Survey and Manage plant and animal species have been completed and appropriate protocol buffer measures will be applied. *Fritillaria gentneri* was not found within the Planning Area.

The estimation of impacts was based on research, professional judgment and experience of the interdisciplinary team. This method of estimating effects to the environment reduces the uncertainties to a level which does not involve highly unknown or unique risks.

**FONSI DETERMINATION**

I have reviewed the environmental assessment, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts not previously identified, and I have also reviewed the comments received from the public concerning this proposal. I have determined the action described above will not have any significant impacts on the human environment beyond those already fully described in the Medford District Resource Management Plan and amendments and that a supplemental EIS is not required.

  
Lynda L. Boody  
Glendale Resource Area Field Manager  
Medford District, BLM

7/3/02  
Date